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February 16, 2009

**TO: Senator Joe Balyeat, Chair, Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs Committee  
 Members of the Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs Committee**

**RE: SB 388 Incumbent Worker Training**

The Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) represents over 200 professionals who work for local economic development organizations across the state of Montana. We are professional "lead" economic developers, business specialists, government employees, and staff members of affiliated non-profit organizations which promote and foster economic development activities in Montana.

MEDA strongly supports SB 388 for the purpose of incumbent worker training. For several years, MEDA has operated the highly successful Montana Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) program which strengthens local companies and enhances a community's business climate. It is a fact that business expansion and retention is an important part of the economic development process. The most growth, wealth creation and expansion capabilities exist within our homegrown businesses that were conceived, incubated and grown in Montana. These are the businesses the BEAR program targets working in conjunction with the Incumbent Worker Training Program.

The Montana BEAR Program was an entry vehicle for the Incumbent Worker Training Grant Pilot Program which proved to be successful and met many existing needs of Montana business owners. Other programs such as Montana's Small Business Development Centers and the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center could also be utilized as entry points for business owners seeking these funds.

Thank you for your support of SB 388 and for strengthening Montana's incumbent worker training program.

Sincerely,

Rick Edwards  
 MEDA Legislative Committee Co-Chair

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